

Thanksgiving Day

RT. REV. JOSEPH SCHREMBS, D.D.

*An address delivered at a citizens' Thanksgiving meeting
in Cleveland, O., November 29, 1928*

THE glorious history of our country brings before us many memorable days that thrill us with sentiments of highest patriotism. There is one day, however, that stands out among them all—Thanksgiving Day—when all the children of the land, without regard to race or creed, raise their hands and hearts to acknowledge an All-ruling kind Providence and to return thanks to Almighty God, the Father of us all, for the countless blessings bestowed upon us as individuals and as a nation.

The act of thanksgiving is a natural expression of our dependence upon the mercy and goodness of God. It is characteristic of everyone who gives any thought to life or to the seriousness of life.

The child gives thanks, is grateful to his parents. Long centuries ago the commandment came from Mount Sinai: "Honor thy father and thy mother."

We are grateful to those who gave us the blessings of life. In the years of our helplessness they nourished us, they clothed us, they gave us a home, they provided for our education, they equipped us and endowed us so that we might meet successfully the struggles of life, and we give them thanks, the love, the devotion, the gratitude of our hearts.

The family is the unit of all social life, the basis of the community. Quite naturally, then, has it come about that our national holiday of Thanksgiving is marked by family gatherings. We love to gather on this day at the old, old home, the home of our childhood. We love to gather round our parents wrinkled with old age. We love to kiss once more the lips that taught us our prayers, and children and grandchildren grow young once more and unite together to tell our thanks to those to whom we owe our life and our happiness. Oh, yes, all over this country of ours today, in the East and in the West, in the North and in the South,

millions of families are gathered as one great family, the family of the United States of America, to offer the homage of holiest thanksgiving.

Is not all this in truth testimony to the fact that the family is the basis of our life as a nation? In offering our thanksgiving for the family, we are offering thanksgiving for the cornerstone upon which our national life rests. We do well, indeed, to bring home to ourselves on this day a realization of what God has given us in the family. We do well on this day to renew our sacred regard for marriage. We do well on this day to ponder the sacred character of the marriage relation, the dignity of fatherhood and motherhood and the weighty duty of training the children. There are forces at work in this country today, anti-social and bolshevik in character, that would destroy marriage as an institution and that would do away with the most sacred human names in our language, the names of "Father," "Mother." There are forces at work that would lift from men and women the responsibility of a stable union and would set at naught the laws of God regarding child-bearing and would make selfishness, not sacrifice, lust, not love, the ruling principle of life. Such propaganda, under whatever name carried on, strikes at the very root of our national life. No nation in the history of the world has ever been able to withstand moral rottenness. America will not be able to withstand it. If, therefore, we have reason for thanksgiving, we have also reason for renewing on this day in our hearts the sacred resolution and pledge that, individually and corporately, we will stand for the purity and the permanency of that institution—the family—which gives so much cause for Thanksgiving Day; which gives the greatest joy we know—the joy of Home Sweet Home.

Our Thanksgiving Day brings home to us the truth that we must be grateful not only for our families but for all the families of the land; yes, for the land itself—our land of America, America that protects and safeguards and unites into one great national family all the homes of our country.

As we thank God for our country, we will come to realize more deeply how we ought to put forth unceasingly our best endeavors to help it keep its glorious mission of worthiness in the world. Its blessing is the blessing of freedom, freedom to all its citizens. Its blessing is the blessing of religious liberty to all its children. Its blessing is the blessing of

peace to all its homes. If we love our country and are thankful for its blessings, then must we become the active campaigners of all these, that they may become universally accepted throughout the land and in every heart. We must learn to love freedom. We must respect religious liberty. We must become lovers of peace, peace for ourselves, peace for all the world. This sense of thanksgiving, gratitude to those who gave us life, and gratitude to our country which protects us in the blessings of life, gratitude for all that we have received, is a precious and instructive virtue.

A righteous fear is the beginning of wisdom and a righteous sense of thanksgiving is the beginning of justice, justice for ourselves and justice for our fellow-men. Men sometimes think they own of their own selves what they possess. Men sometimes think they can use their possessions as they wish and that no man has any right to say whether they shall use it rightly or wrongly. Yet it is an absolute truth that whatever we possess, whatever we have and whatever we are, we owe it to God. It is given to us by His merciful Providence for our use. To thank God for His blessings makes us to remember that He as a good Father has given them to us. We may be tempted to think we acquired them by our own shrewdness, our hard work, our talents, and yet the very gift that makes us shrewd or talented or gives us the power of work is God's gift. All these are His, without Him we would have nothing and it takes only one moment of death to strip us of them all.

If, then, all these are His, we may not use them just as we please. We must use them with justice and with charity to our fellow-man, and with a deep sense of responsibility to God.

To give thanks with our lips only, and not with our hearts, becomes a source of social injustice. There are those who deny God and God's existence and laugh at religion. If this be true and there be no God, then all law is a mere convention and Might becomes Right and every man may grasp and hold what he can and use it for his own pleasure irrespective of his fellow-man. You cannot make a God out of this world, for, if there is any one thing that we know, it is this, that men are not gods. Men only too often are selfish, seek their own interests, seek their own pleasures and get what they can. Deny God and this world becomes selfish and selfishness becomes a universal law. Men prey

one upon the other. Men become unjust one to another. Men seek their own indulgences no matter what the cost.

Thanksgiving is the dyke against the flood of selfishness, but the dyke has no staying power unless it be built upon the truth that we personally owe our debt of gratitude to a personal Infinite God Who through His Son Jesus Christ has revealed Himself the Father of us all.

It is well for us then in this public way, as one community, to meet and to voice this great saving truth. Our hearts will render thanks to the Giver of all good gifts, thanks for our reunited families, thanks for our great city of Cleveland, thanks for our successful community effort which more and more reveals the heart of Cleveland, thanks for our nation of America, thanks for our liberty, for our prosperity, for the peace that is ours, thanks that God our Father in Heaven has permitted us to serve Him and through our service shown forth His glory before men.

Gratitude

RT. REV. MSGR. JOHN L. BELFORD, D.D.

A Thanksgiving sermon preached in the Church of the Nativity, Brooklyn, N. Y. Reprinted from the Brooklyn "Daily Eagle"

THANKS is a small word. Any one can say it. The utterance does not require much effort, but it does require some appreciation. It comes from the lips, but it rises in the heart. It contains more than any word or collection of words can express. No law binds us to be grateful or express our thanks. But something higher than law binds us. It is instinct. There are many instincts in the human soul. One of the best and strongest is gratitude. An old Greek King chose Xenophon to tutor his son and heir. He chose him because he considered him the wisest man in the kingdom. One of the first lessons of Xenophon was the duty of gratitude. He told his pupil that the gods loathe the ungrateful man and chastise him for his wickedness.

Among the people of Israel the duty of gratitude was fundamental. Evidence of the tradition is apparent in the reverence in which the Jew continues to hold his parents.

No people is so savage that there is not some evidence of appreciation in their laws or customs and especially in their religious rites.

Even animals are not destitute of appreciation. They are grateful for the food and attention they receive. In a thousand ways they show their loyalty and affection.

Apart from the instinct, God Himself insists on the duty of gratefulness. He inspired our first parents to offer sacrifices of adoration and thanksgiving. In the first book of the Bible we read of the sacrifices of Cain and Abel; of Noe offering sacrifice to thank God for preserving him and his family from the waters of the deluge.

When the Lord prescribed the sacrifices of the Old Dispensation, He particularly ordered the sacrifice of thanksgiving. He prescribed all the circumstances and details of this august rite. For ages the smoke of sacrifice arose from the tabernacle and the temple. It was a visible expression of the conviction of the people that they owed all they were, all they possessed and all they hoped for to God, their Creator, their Preserver and Best Friend.

CHRIST TAUGHT GRATITUDE

When Christ came into the world He came not merely to teach truth. He came to teach duty. In word and act He taught us thankfulness. When He was only an infant His mother obeyed the law by carrying Him to the temple and giving thanks to God for sending Him into the world and to her. At stated times He went up to Jerusalem to offer the gifts prescribed. We may imagine the joy He found in offering thanks to His Father and the value of His act of thanksgiving. It came from the lips and the heart of a Divine Person.

One of the most striking miracles in the life of Christ became the occasion for an emphatic lesson on the duty of gratitude. Our Lord had healed ten lepers. The cure came while they were on their way to show themselves to the priests, whither Christ had sent them. So overjoyed were they that nine hurried home. Only one came back to thank his benefactor. There is a world of meaning in the remark of Christ, "Were not ten made clean? Where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God but this stranger."

To the reader of St. Paul it is evident that he was grateful, especially for the grace of faith, which he received on the road to Damascus. Not only did he urge his disci-

ples to thank God for all His blessings, he tells them, "We also give thanks to God without ceasing."

A study of sacrifice reveals clearly the instinct which impels man to offer to God gifts and to immolate victims to express his joy over victory or his gratitude for favors received. There are four great ends in every sacrifice: adoration, thanksgiving, atonement and petition. They are solemn expressions of the conviction that God is the life-giver. It is He who causes the grain to grow and the flock to multiply. Man is only a tenant. No matter how carefully he may till the soil, it will remain unproductive unless the Lord blesses it with sunshine and moisture. So, too, human life comes from God. In Him we live and move and have our being. We are responsible to God for the way we use all His gifts. The farmer, therefore, brought to the temple and offered to the Lord the first fruits of his field and the firstlings of his flock, as a tenant might share with the owner his crops and his produce. The owner furnishes the soil, the tenant furnishes the labor.

A PART OF HUMAN WORSHIP

Now, sacrifices have always been a part of human worship. Instinct demands them and the Lord prescribes them. While there has always been the interior and spiritual sacrifices of obedience, resignation, and submission, there has never been a time when there was not an exterior sacrifice, with an external rite in which there was a visible priest and a tangible victim.

While the whole life of Christ was a sacrifice in which He offered Himself as a victim, the consummation of the sacrifice did not come until the end of His life. On the cross, He offered Himself not merely to atone for sin, but to return adequate thanks to the Father.

Now, Christ came into the world not merely to visit it; He came to reign over it forever. Of His kingdom there is no end. He was not only a king; He was and is a Priest. "Thou art a priest forever," said the Eternal Father, speaking to His Son in the First Psalm. The eternal Priest must offer an eternal sacrifice. "In every place there is sacrifice and there is offered to my name a clean oblation." The prophecy of Malachy is fulfilled in the new rite of praise and thanksgiving which Christ instituted on Holy Thursday.

The sun in its course shines down upon altar after altar, now in one land and now in another, where the Blessed Victim is immolated every day to thank God for His infinite goodness, His sublime patience and His unfathomable mercy. While the smoke of sacrifice does not ascend, the voice of the Divine Victim rises above the sordidness, the tumult, the discord and rebellion of men in an eternal thanksgiving. Sometimes we wonder why God spares the cities in which there is so much vice and so little virtue; why it is that Divine wrath does not descend upon the thankless millions who never think of thanking God for all the blessings He pours out upon them. Perhaps the explanation lies in the presence of the Divine Victim who never ceases to offer thanks and who forever calls on us to thank God with Him. "Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God!" Read the hymn of the angels: "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee! We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory." But the duty of giving thanks is not confined to the Church or to public worship. It concerns the individual. And it is a duty which he owes not only to God, but to his government, his parents and his teachers and other benefactors.

WHEN MAN IS AN INGRATE

The man who allows a day to pass without thanking God for life, health, peace, prosperity, is an ingrate. Yet, what is more common than this neglect? It comes from the abandonment of morning and night prayer. There was a time, and that not very remote, when family prayer was the rule in every decent family. Before we acquired the habit of rushing through life, of having our meals at all hours and leading the individualistic existence, we used to kneel or bow down in prayer at the beginning and end of every day. In many families there was reverent reading of a portion of the Bible and devout acts of thanksgiving, humble petitions for guidance and assistance. The duty of public worship includes thanksgiving. But that duty is more honored in the breach than the observance. Every year sees fewer people going to church, less reverence for God and holy things, and, therefore, less compunction about thanksgiving.

In our country, the State and the city do so much that the people have come to think that they have a right to the

conveniences and opportunities they enjoy. They are not grateful for the schools in which highly trained teachers try to impart knowledge and develop character. They have no regard for the expensive equipment, the costly books, the comforts they enjoy. They do not notice the work of the various departments which look after their health, their safety and welfare. They never think of the long night hours which the policeman spends to guard life and property and keep order. What a maze our streets would be were it not for the trained men who guard the crossings, regulating traffic! Wind and weather notwithstanding, they are at their posts, splendid examples of discipline and devotion to duty. Who thinks of the postman or the man who cleans the streets, removes the ashes and makes our way smooth and seemly? How rare it is for young man or woman to look up and visit the teacher of school days! Every teacher knows that she need not expect any expression of appreciation from the children to whom she devotes so much time and attention. They think that is what she is paid for!

PARENTS FEEL INGRATITUDE

We place parents last. They know and feel ingratitude. After God, we owe all we are to our parents. No one but a mother knows what it means to bring a child into the world, to watch its development and provide for its wants. Only the recording angel could reveal how many sleepless nights and anxious days our mothers spend. The wonder is that they live at all, that their tired hearts keep beating and their weary hands keep on toiling. Nor is all the anxiety borne by mother. Father never receives the credit that is his due. There is no consideration for his daily grind to procure food and clothes and shelter. His is an anxious mind. Frequently he has to live on a margin so small that he is always fearful of illness or unemployment. He cares not so much for himself as he does for his family. In nearly twenty years of the life of every child, he is dependent upon his parents. Can we think of any crime so base as the ingratitude of children? Well might King Lear voice the bitterness of his soul when his unnatural children drove him out into the wintry storm:

How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child!

Yet, parents are largely responsible for the ingratitude they receive. When they fail to teach their children to be grateful to God and to them, to relatives, friends and teachers, they have no right to expect anything but ingratitude! We reap what we sow. If we are ungrateful we cannot expect our children to be grateful. What a price the guilty parent pays! There are thousands of old men and women living in back rooms, clothed in cast-off garments, and living on scraps who lavished money and luxury on their children. Go to the homes for the aged, see the bent forms and broken hearts waiting for the coming of the good angel, death, to release them from their shame and privation. The while their ungrateful children are living in comfort. From time to time they send the old man a little tobacco or the old woman a few comforts, but they rarely visit them and never show the slightest sign of affection. More than one upstart whom fortune or fate has made powerful or rich has allowed his parent to die in what we call a "home" and even when he was dead allowed him to be flung into a pauper's grave.

The Lord tells us the sin of those who defraud the laborer of his wages cries to heaven for vengeance. Surely, the sin of the ungrateful child cries louder and invites a deeper vengeance. But we are children not only of men. We have a generous, loving Father in heaven. What we owe to our earthly parent is only a drop in the unfathomable ocean of our debt to God.

It is a good thing for us to look about us and compare ourselves with others. Think of how many friends you have seen to fail and pass away while you have survived to be sixty or maybe eighty years old; how many of your friends are ill, some of them incurable, some of them in pain, some of them blind, lame, deaf or mutilated; how many are poor and cold and hungry. Think of those who have lost their reason or who are more or less defective in intelligence. Most of the world is living in ignorance of everything except what the daily papers tell them. The world of books is unexplored by them. The noble and beautiful things which the best minds have labored so hard to express and preserve and transmit are utterly unknown to them.

Finally, think of the spiritual favors we enjoy. We have the blessed light of faith. It opens to us another world, greater, more gloriously beautiful than anything this world possesses. It reveals to us the glory of the Lord,

the substance of things to be hoped for. Well might our Saviour say, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that you see and the ears which hear the things that you hear." In most of our neighbors there is no God, no Father in heaven, no blessed Saviour, no Comforting Spirit. For all these let us be thankful and lift up our hearts and voices in a never-ceasing *Deo Gratias!*

The Future of the Church in 'England

REV. FRANCIS WOODLOCK, S.J.

*The following article is reprinted from the London "Sunday Times,"
whose editor dissociated himself from the views which
Father Woodlock expresses*

A CENTENARY celebration is, of its nature, mainly retrospective, and so, as was to be expected, many of the speeches made at the recent celebrations of Roman Catholic Emancipation recalled the history of the growth and development of the Catholic Church in England since the Act of 1829.

The present writer faces the more hazardous task of prophecy; or, rather, he aims at a frank—and possibly naive—expression of his expectations and hopes for the future of his Church and the grounds on which his expectations are based.

Looking backwards, two outstanding events are seen to have had a dominating influence on the growth of the Roman Catholic Church¹ in this country—Irish immigration due to the great famine, and the Oxford Movement. Both causes contributed elements to the character of present-day Catholicism in England, and Congress speakers paid generous and grateful tribute to what the Church owes to Ireland and to the converts who came to her from without. There is no prospect of the Church receiving any similar increase in membership in the future from immigration. But the Irish stock is still with us, and its natural fertility will be un-

¹The use of the phrase *Roman Catholic Church*, and of the term *Anglo-Catholic*, is retained throughout this reprint, conformably to the original text prepared for the secular press.—ED. CATHOLIC MIND.

affected by that vigorous birth-control propaganda which seems destined to have such a devastating effect on what may be called the "natural increase" of membership in other denominations.

CHURCH AND BIRTH CONTROL

While there is no possibility that the Roman Catholic Church will ever withdraw its opposition to the practice of contraception, with which even the youth of the country is being familiarized today, there is no likelihood that any of the Protestant denominations will proclaim an authoritative religious ban against the practice or adopt the Catholic moral teaching that it is vicious and mortally sinful.

While, then, the Catholic schools of the future will be as full as they are today, and there will be the same constant need of extension to provide new accommodation for the increasing number of Catholic children, it will be found that no corresponding extension is needed for the non-Catholic children of the nation. As soon as the birth-control propaganda effectively reaches the poorer classes, whose children crowd into the State elementary schools today, there will be a still more rapid decrease in population, and some of the existing non-Catholic schools may be closed for lack of scholars. There are no causes at work which may be looked to to effect a recovery in the nation's fertility, and thus to remove from England the stigma of having the lowest birth rate in the world. Hence, Catholicism will increase in membership while other denominations decrease as a direct result of the Catholic Church's firm attitude with regard to contraception. Continent self-restraint is the only means of the limitation of families which the Church recognizes as legitimate.

CONVERTS TO ROME

In approaching the subject of growth in membership through the coming of converts from without, we can learn from the past what motives draw men to Rome, and a study of the present movement in non-Roman Christianity in England today and its tendencies and objectives may enable us to conjecture whether more or fewer converts are, humanly speaking, likely to come in the future than came in the past. Since the Oxford Movement well over a thou-

sand clergymen "came over," and all came because they found themselves unable to hold to the belief that the Established Church was truly a part or "branch" of the Church Catholic. All agreed in this conclusion, though they arrived at it by various argumentative routes, and it was this conclusion which compelled their secession.

It is not improbable, but almost certain, that the next century will see the accomplishment of that reunion between the non-Catholic denominations towards which there is so definite an approach today. It will also, in all probability, see the Disestablishment of the National Church, which even now is being demanded by more than one Anglican bishop as a result of Parliament's refusal to sanction the Revised Prayer Book presented to it by the Church's National Assembly for its approval. It is not impossible that reunion with the Free Churches may be secured only after the voluntary surrender by the Anglican Church of the privileged position which Establishment gives.

The fact, to which the Bishop of Durham draws attention, that

out of a population which exceeded 36,000,000, no more than 3,686,422 persons above the age of eighteen registered themselves in 1927 as members of the National Church, and of these only 2,528,391 were communicants, and that it may be doubted whether more than one in thirteen of the Parliamentary electors is an Anglican communicant,

will be pressed to its logical conclusion, and will, from another angle, support the Church's claim to have the final voice in setting its own doctrines and worship.

REUNION OF NON-ROMAN BODIES

At first sight it might seem that reunion between all the non-Catholic denominations would diminish the Roman Catholic Church's prospects of converts from without. "Non-Roman" Christianity would present a united front, whether the reunited bodies became a single close organization as one Protestant Church or merely a confederation of intercommunicating bodies. In either case, unity would seem to bring in a new force, lacking today in the scattered units which so often are to a great extent in opposition to and in competition with each other.

It is, however, all-important to note the conditions under which alone reunion could be achieved. Even if there were

a transition stage, as exemplified in the Indian Church scheme, it would necessarily involve a real compromise on the doctrine of Apostolic Succession as understood by Anglo-Catholics—a doctrine to which they cling tenaciously as an essential and fundamental principle of Christ's Church.

"APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION"

As in the past the Gorham case drove Manning and others to Rome, it is probable that the repudiation of Apostolic Succession, even if it be only in a temporary and transitional measure of expedience, would make many Anglo-Catholics secede. They do not share the view of the Archbishop of York that episcopal ordination is not necessary for valid priesthood. Archbishop Temple has stated:

If a layman "celebrates" with devout intention, he effects a real consecration, and any who receive from his hands, receive the Divine Gift. None the less, he acts wrongly ("Christus Veritas," p. 162).

"Orders" to the Anglo-Catholic mind mean much more than mere "orderliness." And Church reunion is likely to be brought about by a compromise which would make the faith of the United Church content with the lesser view of the nature of its ministry. The Anglican side of the reunion contract would agree to leave the significance of "priesthood" an open question. A leading Anglo-Catholic writer, the Rev. Wilfrid Knox, has said:

It is always conceivable that a Protestant episcopate might take some action, as, for instance, the establishment of general intercommunion with the Nonconformist bodies, which would forfeit the Catholic character of the English Church. In such a case, English Catholics would almost inevitably be compelled to seek reconciliation with the Holy See ("Catholic Movement in the English Church," p. 252).

GROWTH OF MODERNISM

The remarkable growth of Modernism is a still more vital factor to be considered in studying the problem of the future of English Christianity. Definite threats of corporate secession have recently been made in editorial articles in the *Church Times* and *Theology* as a protest against the unfettered freedom of prominent Modernists to express their views in the pulpits of the Anglican Church.

I believe that the progress of the Modernist movement will be the main cause of driving a steadily increasing number of Anglo-Catholics to the Roman Catholic Church as the only religious body left in the West in which the holding of a definitely supernatural form of Christianity is insisted on as a condition of membership. I feel convinced that Modernism will, in the next fifty years, make even more rapid progress than did Anglo-Catholicism during the last century. I agree fully with Dr. Major's estimate of the development of the movement in recent years, and with his statement that in the future Modernism will have only one foe to face in its effort to win the soul of rapidly paganizing England. He says:

In the Church of England, Modernism may be said to breathe its native air and to possess that habitat which admits of its growth. The English Church is the ideal seed-bed of Modernism, and that Modernism will flourish and develop there, though it may have died in other communions or have grown up in them a sickly plant ("English Modernism," pp. 43, 47).

MODERNISM AND THE PLAIN MAN

With regard to the large majority of the people, the "men-in-the-street," that England which has to be reconverted to Christianity and won again to the practice of religion, my belief is that the good sense of the "plain man" will prevent him from being satisfied with a de-supernaturalized, non-miraculous version of the Gospel.

He will be apt to see the truth which the author of "Ecce Homo" expressed so forcibly in a well-known passage of his book:

Miracles play so important a part in Christ's scheme that any theory which would represent them as due entirely to the imagination of His followers, or of a later age, destroys the credibility of the documents, not partially, but wholly, and leaves Christ a personage as mythical as Hercules.

I think that Modernists miscalculate the reaction of common sense to their restatement of Christianity.

Not long ago a Modernist sermon addressed to the "plain man" appeared in a Saturday issue of a leading London daily paper. The subject was the feeding of the multitude by Christ in the desert. The naturalistic explanation offered to eliminate the miraculous was that it was a simple case

of "food hoarding." There was plenty of food in the crowd, but those who had it were hoarding their supplies. The Apostles, at Christ's bidding, shared out their little store of loaves and fishes, and the hoarders were shamed into sharing their food with those who had none!

The "plain man's" good sense will have turned with disgust from such trifling with his intelligence. It is easier to believe in a miraculous Christianity than to accept Modernism.

THE APPEAL OF INFALLIBILITY

Finally, the strength of the appeal of the Roman Catholic Church will lie in the fact that she alone will insist on the literal acceptance of the Gospel history and sincere belief in her creeds as a condition of membership. She alone will continue to teach with an authority which echoes the voice of Him who, when founding His Church and commissioning it at the beginning, said "Go and teach"; "He that heareth you, heareth me; he that despiseth you despiseth me"; "I will be with you all days to the end of the world"; "He that believeth not shall be condemned."

The Church's authoritative tone, her claim to infallibility and her intolerance of heresy will, paradoxically it may seem, be what will win men in increasing numbers to her membership in the time to come, when all other churches have openly relinquished any claim to dictate to their members what they must believe.

The Church in Modern Poland

Reprinted from the Melbourne "Advocate," June 20, 1929

SOME years ago when leaving the sanctuary of the Queen of Poland, Our Lady of Czenstochowa, the present Pope, Pius XI, then Nuncio at Warsaw, uttered these significant words: "I shall never forget how the Polish people pray." And, in fact, it is not its magnificent cathedrals, it is not the number nor the influence of its priests, it is not its numerous energetic organizations which make manifest to an outsider the life and force of Polish Catholicism. But it is the prayerful spirit of the people, kneeling in crowds on the bare floors of the poorest churches. In the past, during the dark days of foreign oppression, this spirit of prayer,

simple as that of a child, kept alive the faith and nationality of Poland. Today, when the emissaries of Protestantism, profiting by the material misery of the people, would purchase a Christian soul for a few paltry dollars, it still remains their efficacious guardian.

The Poland which emerged from the Great War had a surface area of nearly 152,000 square miles and 27,906,000 inhabitants. Thanks to the fecundity of the race and a Christian outlook on family life, this population is increasing rapidly and is overwhelmingly Catholic. Of every thousand inhabitants, 743 are Catholics (622 Latin rite, 121 Greek Uniate), 116 are Jews, 93 Orthodox Greeks, and 47 Protestants. There are 21 Catholic dioceses, containing a total of 4,586 parishes, which are under the direction of the secular clergy. The secular clergy, as compared with those in other Catholic countries, are few in number (one priest to about 2,400 people) and but for the assistance of the regular clergy could not provide for the spiritual needs of the people.

CATHOLIC LEGISLATURE

It is evident, of course, that the religious conditions, externally at least, will depend for some time on the Legislature. In this respect, at present, Poland has little to complain of. In the present Parliament, both in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate, the Catholics are numerically in the majority, and there are nineteen priests among the deputies, but the Catholics are not all members of one party and are divided on political and social questions. However, on the united demand of the Catholic members, the crucifix adorns the walls of the chambers in both houses. The opening of Parliament is preceded by Solemn High Mass and a sermon in Warsaw Cathedral, and the Government takes official cognizance of all the great feasts of the Church. The President of the Republic must be a Catholic, and in accordance with Article 54 of the Constitution, the oath he takes on assuming office opens with the words: "I swear before God who is One in the Holy Trinity and before you, people of Poland," etc. Hence, "May God and the Passion of His Son assist me." The present President is a model Catholic. He has no hesitation about proclaiming on all occasions the great and beneficent influence of the Catholic Church, and affirms fearlessly that the existence of the

Polish Republic is bound up with Catholic faith and practice and should have these as its foundation-stones. When traveling officially, he never fails to visit the church, and his public reception of the Sacraments is a source of great edification to the people. In a recent speech he gave an indication of his religious policy in the following words: "It is the duty of the President to strive for the moral uplift of the people by close cooperation with the Catholic Church. It is not sufficient to rely on natural reason alone. There is need, in addition, of a profound religious sentiment. Whatever is built on the teaching of Christ as taught by the Catholic Church is lasting and indestructible."

CATHOLIC PRINCIPLES

The future of society depends on the rising generation and on the formation, intellectual and moral, which that generation is now receiving. And on the question of schools, the Polish Constitution favors Catholic principles. In schools supported by the State, religious instruction is part of the ordinary curriculum, and each student must get a credit in that branch just as in history or any other subject. The Bishop is director of religious instruction for all the schools within his area. The teacher of Christian doctrine is paid by the State. In the case of Catholic instructors, the teacher must be a priest, and a graduate of the faculty of Catholic theology in one of the State universities. Of the six universities existing in Poland, Warsaw, Cracow Pozna, Wilno, Lwow, and Lublin, the last alone is a specifically Catholic organization and is, according to the will of the founder, under the direction of the Hierarchy of Poland. Three of the others, however, have a State-endowed faculty of Catholic theology. There are in addition ecclesiastical seminaries in every diocese. Many of the lay professors at the State universities are Catholics, in every sense worthy of the name.

CATHOLIC ASSOCIATIONS

But what is perhaps the most striking feature of Catholic life in Poland today is the rapid, almost feverish, development of Catholic associations of all sorts. Necessarily, organizations of this kind did not begin in Poland till comparatively recent times; for the country, conquered and

partitioned among its spoilers and more hated perhaps than feared by its conquerors, belonged, until the Great War, to the family of oppressed nationalities, whilst a stern and almost brutal regime, in Prussian and Russian Poland especially, suppressed systematically every manifestation of national and religious life. During this period the people's great, perhaps their sole, preoccupation was to live, to maintain the language, the traditions, the Faith of their ancestors, while they awaited in dogged patience the day of liberation.

The first effort towards Christian social action began in Poznan, under the form of peasants' associations, which as early as 1861 had been grouped under the name of the Central Agricultural Union of Poznan. By 1875, the movement had reached Galicia; later, about 1904, it spread to Russian Poland. By the beginning of the War, its influence was felt and its associates could be numbered everywhere within the boundaries of ancient Poland. With the dawn of liberty, the unification of the movement, until then scattered and disconnected, was undertaken. There is in the Parliament a Catholic group with a program of social reform and Christian democracy wisely progressive in the spirit of the "*Rerum Novarum*." Taking inspiration from this group, the promoters of unification of Catholic social action proposed to realize in their scheme four main objects: the intellectual and moral uplift of the working class, its organization according to vocational groups, the formation of a strong political party from it, and finally the increase of its material comfort by means of various economic measures. The method of organization is as follows: in the first place, a local workers' association (at least thirty members in each) with a priest, named and approved by the Bishop, occupying the post of adviser in matters touching Catholic doctrines and morals; a district confederation, grouping the various local associations; above that again the diocesan union; and at the top the national league. This organization has a numerical strength of 200,000 working men and women grouped under the name of the League of Christian Workers' Associations. The number is small, but the work is still in its infancy. Side by side with this movement, the work of Christian syndicates or trade unions was boldly launched in 1918. Well-advised and friendly legislation helped its beginnings, and it is making rapid progress. The three main centers for this organization of industrial workers

are Warsaw, Cracow, and Wilno. The number of workers enrolled in such trade unions at Warsaw is 45,000, while the central organization at Cracow, drawing mainly on the coal fields of Cracow and the salt mines of Wieliczka, has an enrolled membership of about 80,000. The official organ of the Christian trade unions of Poland is published at Warsaw. The organization of similar trade unions for agricultural workers was undertaken about the end of 1918. Today it includes a total of almost 100,000 unionists and possesses an official organ, the *Agricultural Worker*, and a Workers' Bank for the support of its various cooperative enterprises. The unification of the whole organization is achieved through the central federation at Warsaw.

The efforts of Catholic women in the field of social action finds expression in the Catholic Union of Polish Women, begun in 1907. The object of this association is to unite the Catholic women of Poland in work for national betterment and for the solution of feminist problems in accord with the teachings and obligations of Catholic ethics. Divided into five sections, each section of the organization devotes itself to work in some sphere of feminine activity; religion and moral training, education, social life, political and economic problems affecting women, and spiritual aid for soldiers. The association, which is under the presidency of the Countess Wodzicka, had a membership at the end of 1922 of about 80,000. The general secretariate is at Warsaw, and the union is affiliated to the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues.

Like the general movement for Catholic social action, the work of Catholic organization for youth took its rise in Poznan. A federation was begun there in 1910 with a periodical called the *Friend of Youth*. As a result of a congress in Warsaw in February, 1918, the Federation of Associations of Polish Youth began its existence and since that date has methodically developed through the whole of Poland. Under the direction of the Rev. Fr. Adamski, it groups all the different associations for young people between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five who have left school and begun work. Seventeen local secretariates in the chief cities link together 1929 associations, some of which are exclusively for young men, some for young ladies, while others are mixed. The general secretariate at Poznan unifies and controls the activities of the local groups, edits the offi-

cial organ, prepares congresses, etc. The association possesses its own publishing house and printing press.

In addition to this general association, there exists an association of working boys, the headquarters of which is at Cracow. Its activities are fourfold: religious and civic instruction; after-school education, technical and intellectual; social study; hygiene and physical development. The work, which is under the direction of a Jesuit Father, has already given to the country some thousands of industrial workers well-fitted in every way to take their places as room or factory foremen.

The students of secondary schools and universities are grouped in the "Renaissance," the center of which is at Warsaw, where the association possesses a library and reading room, and whence it makes known its ends through a periodical, the *Current*. Its activities resemble those of all Catholic student bodies: association in intellectual work, participation in spiritual and corporal works of mercy, study-circles of various kinds, academies, etc. Branches exist in all the universities and in many secondary schools.

The most popular and most strictly religious organization is the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin. In various forms it groups all ages and classes. Poland possesses over 400 sodalities affiliated to the Prima Primaria, with a total membership of over 50,000, and a periodical, *Sodalis Marianus*, with a circulation of 5,000.

We cannot omit a mention of the press, the importance of which is widely recognized today. In 1923, there appeared in the Polish language 975 periodicals of various kinds in Poland itself, 107 in the United States of America, 23 in various other countries. There are 300 daily papers published in Poland. The great majority of these publications are Catholic in spirit. Forty address themselves to the younger members of the community, and forty-eight are religious or ecclesiastical. The *General Review*, a literary periodical, has a circulation of 3,000; the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart*, 62,000; *Faith and Life*, 5,000; *Catholic Missions*, 3,000; *Catholic Voice*, 20,000.